



# Step Ahead at Age 3

pg. 2

Planning Ahead

pg. 4

"90 Day" Transition  
Meeting

pg. 6

Evaluation for Special  
Education Services

pg. 8

Reviewing the  
Evaluation Results

pg. 10

Preparing for the IEP

pg. 12

IEP Meeting

pg. 14

Putting the IEP  
into Action

**O**n or near the third birthday, a child steps ahead from Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) services to Early Childhood Special Education services and/or other community services.

Moving from program to program is called transition. Families and service providers walk through this transition together, one step at a time.



*A Guide for Families in Alaska*





# Planning Ahead

**T**ransitions are natural events for all children, families, and the professionals who support them. Successful transitions begin as people think about the future, plan ahead and work together. As your child nears age 3, he or she may transition from the EI/ILP to Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, or other child care programs. Some of these programs have special requirements that guide the actions that must be taken.

This Family Guide is a tool to assist you in making decisions for your child. Other resources may also be helpful as you begin to think about transition:

- friends who have young children,
- local parent organizations,
- a family with a child slightly older than your child,
- PARENTS, Inc. (1-800-478-7678),
- local EI/ILP \_\_\_\_\_,
- local school district \_\_\_\_\_,
- other \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Some questions to consider:*

What do you hope for your child?  
 What does your child need – now – to grow and develop?  
 Who do you want your child to play and learn with?  
 Where do you get information about transition?  
 Where would your child be if he or she didn't have a developmental delay or disability?



*"I think parents have been searching for a road map to help us decipher 'the system.' The task is extremely complex."*

**Mother**

**What programs or activities should you consider after your child leaves the Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program?**

Early Childhood Special Education Services

Head Start

Community preschools and child care centers

Family child care

Community recreation programs

Library story hours

Cooperative play groups



## To plan ahead...

### Your family can –

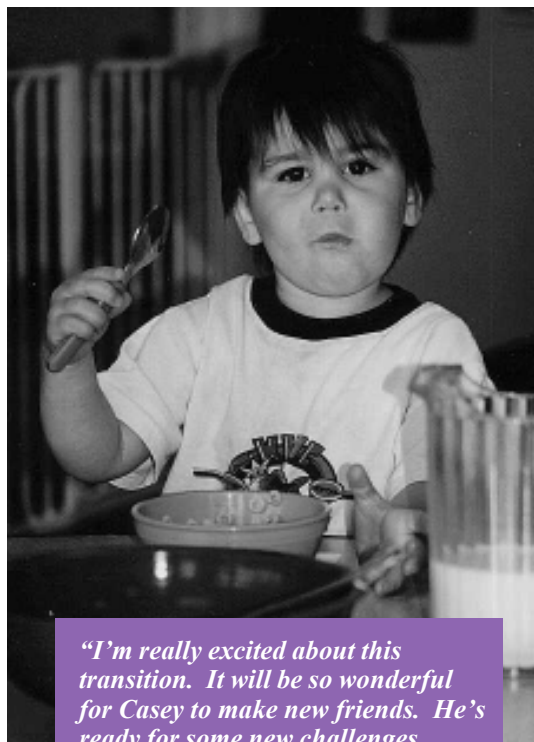
- Discuss what resources are available and what types of programs or services you wish to pursue
- Talk about transition with your Early Intervention Specialist
- Decide how much you wish to be involved in the planning process
- Decide if you want a friend or relative to participate in transition planning meetings with you
- Write transition outcomes and strategies for your IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan)
- Consider talking with friends or other community resources to learn about transition
- Give written permission to your EI/ILP to refer your child to the next program.

### EI/ILP staff will -

- Provide information about transition and related community resources
- Begin the transition process by discussing plans with your family in the IFSP at least 6 months prior to third birthday
- Decide with your family where to make referrals
- Schedule a transition planning meeting with your family and Early Childhood Special Education staff or other service provider at least 90 days before your child's third birthday
- Obtain signed release of information from your family.

### Receiving Program will -

- Receive the referral from the EI/ILP
- Work together with your family and EI/ILP staff on transition planning
- Prepare to share information with your family about the program, the eligibility requirements and possible placement settings.



*"I'm really excited about this transition. It will be so wonderful for Casey to make new friends. He's ready for some new challenges. This is an important time for us."*

Parent

- ☐ The general timeline and some individual outcomes for the transition were written in the IFSP.
- ☐ Community resources have been identified.
- ☐ The transition meeting has been scheduled.

## Step 1: Planning Checklist



## Step 2: "90 Day" Transition Meeting

**T**he transition meeting occurs at least **90 days** before your child's third birthday. The transition meeting is the time when you and your EI/ILP Team and the receiving program(s) meet to develop your

child's transition plan. This plan outlines the steps that your family and the current and future programs will follow over the next months to help make your transition smooth and pleasant.

Many parents like to visit schools, Head Start, and child care centers where their children may attend. Here is a place to list such programs in your community.

Program	Address	Phone	Contact Person

### Tips for Program Visits

- Make an appointment. Visit only at the scheduled time.
- Upon arrival, check in at the office.
- Ask the teacher where to sit and whether to interact with the children.
- Write down questions to ask the teacher later.
- Schedule a time to talk with the teacher at the end of your visit or at a later time. You may want to talk with the teacher privately about your child.
- Ask the teacher for suggestions to help ease your child into school.

Remember that the time of the year influences your observations (children act differently at the beginning vs. the end of the year).

### *When visiting a new program...*

...it's helpful to picture your child as part of the group. Consider these questions:

- Do the children appear to be happy? Are they actively involved with materials and with each other?
- Does the program accept children with disabilities?
- Are staff trained with children with disabilities?
- How is communication encouraged?
- Does this program respect our family's values and traditions?
- How are families involved?
- What is the ratio of adults to children in this program?
- Is the travel time from our home to the center reasonable for a young child?



## *Who will attend the “90-Day” transition meeting?*

Family

Friends or relatives invited by the family

EI/ILP staff

Receiving Program(s) staff (eg: Head Start, Preschool, Special Education Preschool, Child Care)

## *At the Transition Meeting...*

### **Your family can -**

- Share your hopes for your child
- Agree to participate in the transition planning process at the level that feels comfortable for you
- Ask questions about anything that is unclear
- Review parental rights information
- Make sure the transition plan includes options that help realize your dreams for your child
- Sign consent forms for release of records and evaluations, if necessary.

### **EI/ILP staff will -**

- Invite appropriate people from other agencies
- Host the transition meeting
- Share information as requested by your family
- Participate actively in transition planning
- Write the transition plan and timeline that are decided at the meeting.

### **Receiving Program staff will -**

- Discuss eligibility requirements, if any
- Explain parental rights (if applicable)
- Discuss possible services and places where they might be provided
- Consider your concerns about the transition
- Participate actively in transition planning
- Inform you of costs (if any) for program or services.

## **Some Questions To Ask at the Transition Meeting**

- How will our child’s eligibility be determined?
- What additional testing will be done?
- Who can we call if we have questions?
- What are the different ways services can be provided?
- Whom do we need to contact if we want to visit a program or classroom?
- When are good times for us to visit?
- When is the right time for our child to visit the classroom?
- When will we meet next?

☐ A transition meeting was held with our family, EI/ILP and receiving program staff.

☐ A transition timeline was developed.

☐ A transition plan was agreed to by all those attending.

☐ Options for services were listed.

## **Step 2: Meeting Checklist**

## Step 3: Evaluation for Special Education Services

If your child is being referred to Early Childhood Special Education, additional steps must be taken in planning the transition. The first step is interdisciplinary evaluation.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each child who has been referred to Early Childhood Special Education be evaluated to find out whether he or she is eligible to receive special services. You must give **written** permission before the evaluation can occur. The first step in the evaluation process is the review of records. The school district will review all the information it receives. The purpose of the review is to decide what additional evaluations are needed for your child.



Some of the information needed for the evaluation comes from a review of your child's records in the EI/ILP. New information will come from additional informal and formal assessments. Some of the information will be gathered in natural, play-like situations. Other sources of information may be tests with required activities.

Each professional who conducts an evaluation specializes in a different aspect of child development. The evaluation team including the parents will determine your child's eligibility for special education services. If your child is found eligible for these services, the evaluation results will be used to develop educational goals as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

<i>Dates To Remember for Evaluation</i>			
<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Information To Bring</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

<i>Persons Who Will Be Evaluating My Child</i>		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Area of Specialty</i>	<i>Phone</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



## *Questions to ask before the evaluation*

- What will be done? Why? By whom?
- Where will it be done?
- Who will be present?
- What information can the team expect to learn?
- What does your family hope to learn about your child?
- How can you help?

## *During the Evaluation Process...*

### *Your family will -*

- Share with the team what you feel is important about your child and family
- Try to schedule evaluation activities at your child's best time, perhaps mornings or after naps
- Ask questions about the evaluation

### *EI/ILP staff will -*

- Share records and testing information on file
- Invite Early Childhood Special Education staff to see your child in the EI/ILP center or on a home visit
- Answer questions your family and the multidisciplinary team may have

### *Early Childhood Special Education staff will*

- Provide professional staff to evaluate your child
- Explain and plan the evaluation with your family
- Obtain and review records and testing information already on file
- Decide what new information is needed
- Complete the evaluations
- Schedule the Eligibility Meeting to review results of the evaluation and determine eligibility
- Explain parent rights and procedural safeguards.

## *What areas may be included in the comprehensive evaluation?*

- Review of previous records
- Health and medical history including hearing and vision
- Developmental history
- Thinking and problem solving (cognitive behavior)
- Talking, listening and understanding (communication)
- Movement of small and large muscles (fine motor; gross motor)
- Self-care skills (adaptive behavior)
- Getting along with others (social-emotional behavior)

Members of the team will work with you to schedule evaluation activities. These activities may take place in your home, at child care or at school.

- ☐ Records from the EI/ILP were reviewed
- ☐ Information from our family was considered
- ☐ The Eligibility Meeting was scheduled
- ☐ Options for services were listed
- ☐ Parent Rights and procedural safeguards were explained.

## **Step 3: Evaluation Planning Checklist**





## Step 4: Reviewing the Evaluation Results

**A**fter the evaluation is completed, the team will discuss the results with you. Team members will also provide you with a copy of their written evaluation report. Results of the evaluation will be used to determine your child's eligibility for special education services. If you, as a parent, do not agree with the professional opinions, steps can be taken to obtain an independent evaluation.

If your child is eligible for special education, information from the evaluation will be used to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Some



school districts offer the option to use an IFSP similar to what you have known in the EI/ILP. If this is the case, the differences between an IFSP and IEP will be reviewed with you.

If your child is not eligible for special education, your family may be interested in participating in other early childhood services in the community. Many communities offer programs with enriching social and language experiences for young children. Members of the team will share information about such programs in your community.

---

### *Understanding the Evaluation Results*

Many parents prefer to review the written reports completed by the professionals who participated in the evaluation, if available.

Some questions to consider asking the professionals are:

1. Did the evaluation accurately reflect my child's typical behavior at home and at school?
2. How does my child's performance compare with his/her previous performance on the same or similar measures?
3. What are my child's strengths?
4. What is my child's learning style?
5. How will you use the information from the evaluation in planning my child's education program?





## A Transition Story

### *“Lindsey Steps Ahead”*



I will never forget the day my husband and I learned that our beautiful 11-month-old daughter, Lindsey, was profoundly deaf. Within the same week, the infant learning teacher came to our door. She was very compassionate and understanding of all our emotions and feelings. The help and support of the infant learning program was what our family needed in those first years.

The transition from infant learning to the public school started about a year prior to our daughter turning three. The infant learning teacher began telling us about what an IEP would be like, what inclusion meant and about our child's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act. She set an appointment for the Special Education Director to meet with us and discuss Lindsey's entry into the public school system. Next, the preschool teacher came to our home to get acquainted with our daughter.

We visited the classroom a few times to help make the transition more gradual for our daughter. The preschool teacher took pictures of the classroom, herself, and her aide, and sent the pictures home for us to study and learn. The pictures also had sign language on them. The preschool teacher placed signs above everything in the classroom and started to learn along with the aide. The school also found an interpreter to work in the classroom before Lindsey started preschool. We were then all prepared for the transition when the time came.

Today Lindsey loves the preschool program. She sometimes does not want to come home because she is having so much fun there. The other children seem to love her. This transition has been very successful due to careful preparation and the wonderful teachers we have had. They are the best.

—By Linda Erickson

## *Based on the Evaluation Results...*

### Your family can -

- Consult a friend or relative, if you choose
- Ask any questions
- Participate in making decisions about eligibility and future steps.

### EI/ILP staff will -

- Support your family during this transition step
- Provide information to help make decisions about eligibility and future steps
- Assist your family in finding community services whether or not your child is eligible for special education services.

### Early Childhood Special Education staff will-

- Review Parent Rights
- Share results of the evaluation
- Support your family during this transition step
- Participate in making decisions about eligibility and future steps
- Explain the next steps in the transition process for eligible children.

- ☐ Parent Rights were reviewed
- ☐ The team met to discuss evaluation results
- ☐ Parents received a written report
- ☐ Plans for the IEP meeting or other community services were discussed

### Step 4: Evaluation Review



## Step 5: Planning for Special Education Services— Preparing for the IEP Meeting

**T**he IEP meeting is a significant event for your child and family. Those who know the child best have an important role in developing the individualized plan. Taking time to prepare for this role will make a difference in the educational services developed for your child.

The purpose of the IEP meeting is to develop an individualized education plan for your child. All of the observations and assessments that have been carried out by family members and professionals will be put to practical use.



Goals will be written to reflect the team's aims for your child. Activities, including therapies, to reach those goals will be planned. Decisions will be made about the services your child will receive and about the setting or placement where the services will take place. Family members, school district staff, and individuals knowledgeable about your child contribute to these decisions. You may be asked to describe your child's current development along with what you wish him or her to learn during the next year. (Families may offer this information even if not asked.)

### *How can you prepare for the IEP meeting?*

1. Talk with relatives and friends about your hopes for your child and family.
2. Imagine an "ideal" day for your child, and consider what steps should be taken to make it happen.
3. Think about your child's development (Use the chart on page 11).

### *To Prepare for the IEP Meeting...*

#### **Your family can -**

- Be ready to tell what your child is doing now
- Consider possible goals and objectives for the IEP
- Consider inviting a relative, friend, advocate, or

others knowledgeable about your child to attend the IEP meeting with you.

#### **EI/ILP staff will -**

- Answer questions your family may have
- Consider possible goals and objectives for the IEP
- Attend the IEP meeting.

#### **Early Childhood Special Education staff will -**

- Schedule the IEP meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place early enough to ensure that you have an opportunity to attend
- Answer questions from your family
- Consider possible goals and objectives for the IEP.



# A Look at My Child's Development

<i>Area of development</i>	<i>Some things my child knows or already does in this area</i>	<i>Some things I would like my child to learn in this area</i>
Play — sharing, taking turns, playing by self and with others		
Language — sharing needs, following directions, listening, concepts such as up, down, in, on		
Dressing — taking clothes off and on, zipping, buttoning		
Toileting — sitting on or standing at a potty, time scheduling, toilet training, wiping		
Reading — looking at pictures, listening to stories, favorite characters		
Meals — eating with utensils, eating variety of foods, table manners		
Thinking — cause and effect, colors, sorting, solving problems, counting		
Moving — walking, running, coloring, building with blocks, playing ball		
Other — please list		

- ☐ The IEP meeting was scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and place.
- ☐ Our family was notified by letter of the time and place for the meeting.
- ☐ Our family and the Early Childhood Special Education staff have listed possible goals for our child.

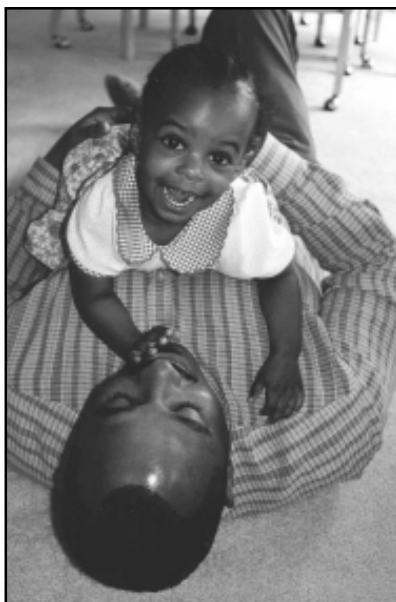
## Step 5: Planning Checklist

## Step 6: The IEP Meeting/Placement Decision

**T**he IEP meeting brings together the family and service providers to put shared goals into writing. Some of the faces will be very familiar to the family, while others may be new.

Family members are a very important part of this IEP team. You will be given opportunities to express your opinions about your child's current activities and your hopes for him or her in the coming year. The team will also ask you what activities you would like your child to work on during the next year (for example, zipping a jacket or playing with other children). These activities will be called goals and objectives. The goals chosen for your child should help your child to become more independent in learning and activities of daily living. Together IEP team members will decide:

- the goals and objectives for your child
- how the goals and objectives will be measured and the time line met



- what special education and related services (therapy, extended school year transportation, and other services) are needed in order to reach those goals

- when the services should begin and how long they will continue

- where the services will be provided, and to what extent your child will be included in regular settings and activities with other children of the same age.

When team members agree upon the issues, the plan will be put into writing, forming your child's Individual Education Program.

You will be given a copy of the written plan. You will be asked to sign it. (Your signature indicates attendance, not agreement or disagreement.) You also will be asked to sign a form for consent for placement in Special Education. Sign this document only if you fully understand and agree. Meetings can be halted and rescheduled if you have questions or reservations about any of the services proposed. **Writing an IEP that meets your child's needs is an important accomplishment.**

### *My Child's IEP Team*

*Name*

*Area of Specialty*

*Phone*

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



## *At the IEP Meeting...*

### **Your family can -**

- Describe your child's present and anticipated activities
- Share ideas for goals and objectives
- Participate in decisions about services and placement
- Ask questions, halt the meeting until your questions are fully answered
- After agreement is reached, sign the Consent for Placement in Special Education

### **Early Intervention staff may -**

- Share ideas for goals and objectives
- Discuss options for services and placement
- After agreement is reached, sign the IEP

### **Early Childhood Special Education staff will -**

- Schedule and host the meeting
- Share ideas for goals and objectives
- Participate in decisions about services and placement, including transportation, staff training and other supports
- Put the IEP into writing

Each community has different places where Early Childhood Special Education service may be provided. You may have visited some of them:

Child care center/preschool

Child's home

Cooperative play group

Family child care

Head Start

Hospital

Public School Classroom

By law, your child's placement must occur in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This placement must be based on the child's needs, and it must be a team decision. The IEP meeting is the time to identify the supports needed to help your child learn in the place selected. These supports might include adult assistance, training for the staff, changes in surroundings or equipment, or specially chosen materials.

- ☐ The IEP meeting was held
- ☐ Discussion and decision-making included our family, EI/ILP staff and special education staff
- ☐ Agreement was reached, and the IEP was written
- ☐ All present signed the IEP to indicate attendance
- ☐ The parents signed the consent for placement

### *Step 6: IEP/Placement Checklist*



## Step7: Putting the IEP (or Other Plan) Into Action

Now it's time to put the plan that you helped to write into action. This is an exciting time of new beginnings for your child and your family. As with anything new, many questions will arise and decisions will need to be made. It's important for you and other members of your IEP team to face these issues together, share information and make decisions that are in the best interests of your child.

### *What issues might we consider?*

Health Care and immunizations

Transportation

Special equipment

Medications

Special diet

Staff orientation or training

Arrangements with community programs

### Parent/family participation

Other issues may include planning for your child's first days in the new programs and finding ways to make those transitional days happy and successful. This may require trial visits to the new classroom, sample bus rides or bringing a familiar toy from home.

The key to assuring a good beginning is close communication among all who know and care for your child: your family, EI/ILP and Early Childhood Special Education Staff, and others your child sees regularly. As you talk together, you will have ideas to help your child enjoy the step ahead. If problems arise, they can be discussed in an atmosphere of openness and respect.



### Questions Families May Ask

Can we visit the new program and meet the staff?

Can we do a trial run on the bus?

What supplies will my child need?

How are food/snacks and toileting handled?

Does the teacher understand the times when my child needs special help?

When and how will the teacher communicate with us?

What activities are there for families at the new program?

What information does the new setting need about my child?

### Questions Children May Wonder About

Who are all the people?

Can my mom stay with me for awhile?

Can I play with all these toys?

Can I bring my blanket to school?

What if I get tired or hungry?

Who will help me?

Can I go home?





## *To Put the IEP into Action...*

### Your family can -

- Ask questions and be open to new ideas
- Help staff at the new program understand your child
- Communicate with your child's former and present caregivers about helping him or her be happy and successful in the new program
- Help your child feel excited and confident about this transition



### Early Childhood Special Education staff will -

- Ask questions and be open to new ideas
- Arrange for the IEP to be carried out
- Consider your family's needs in making decisions
- Communicate with your family and staff from the EI/ILP
- Welcome your child and your family

**"We're on our way!"**

### *At this point...*

...you have worked through the transition process. Your child has stepped ahead from the EI/Infant Learning Program to Early Childhood Special Education services or another pre-kindergarten option. These new beginnings have probably affected everyone in your family.

You have practiced ways of transition planning that you can use again in the future. As you work closely with other people who also care about your child, you find them to be competent and concerned and you begin to trust them with your family's values and hopes. All transitions are more successful when families and service providers work through the process together. Everyone sharing their views of the child, their understandings of the law and their ideas, which can help to make "appropriate education" a reality for every child and family.

- ☐ Our child made the transition from EI/ILP to Early Childhood Special Education services
- ☐ We worked together to resolve any issues that arose
- ☐ We are continuing to communicate during this time of change

## **Step 7: IEP Action Checklist**



# Parent Rights

## *The law says...*

**T**he Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides parents with certain rights related to services for a child with a developmental delay or disability. These rights apply to the EI/ILP and school district special education programs. It is very important for parents or guardians to be fully aware of these rights. If at any point you are uncertain about your rights, please ask questions of your school district. Other sources of information are listed below. Do not sign any agreement until you understand what it means for your child. In brief, your rights under IDEA include the following:

**Transition Plan** – There must be a transition plan developed as part of your child’s and family’s IFSP before your child turns three. The EI/ILP will schedule a transition planning meeting with EI/ILP and Early Childhood Special Education staff at least 90 days prior to your child’s third birthday.

**Written Consent** – You must agree in writing before the evaluation and/or services begin.

**Parent Participation** – You must be consulted about your child’s program and encouraged to participate in creating it. Meetings must be scheduled at mutually agreed times. Communication must be in your native language.

**Multidisciplinary Evaluation** – Your consent is necessary. There is no cost to you for the evaluation. You have a right to have an independent evaluation in addition to the one provided by the school district staff if you disagree with the results. “Multidisciplinary” means two or more appropriately trained professionals are on the evaluation team.

**Records** – You may examine and receive copies of all your child’s records.

**Confidentiality of Information** – The information in your child’s file must be kept confidential.

**Resolution of Disagreements** – If you and the school district cannot agree on the evaluation, the identification, the placement or the provision of a free and appropriate public education for your child, both you and the school have the right to request mediation, complaint investigation, or an impartial hearing, to settle this difference of opinion. There is no cost to you for either a mediation or complaint investigation.

## Sources of Information about Parent Rights

PARENTS, Inc. .... 1-800-478-7678  
 Disability Law Center ..... 1-800-478-1234  
 Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education ..... 1-907-269-8990



**STEP AHEAD AT AGE 3** (1995) WAS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY THE Bridging Early Services Transition Taskforce, a committee of the Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Developmental Services in Kansas.

The Alaska Transition Training Initiative Planning Team revised the document and adapted it for Alaska. The following people worked on this guide: Bobbi Figdor, Karen Martinek, Jane Atuk, Linda Erikson, Wendi Tada, Mary Lou Hanson, Cindy Ryan, Ronda Stoeber, Marj Wiley, Marilyn Webb

Photographic credits: Mary Lou Hanson, Lisa Simono

Formatting & graphics production: Judy Huelsman

Additional copies of STEP AHEAD may be obtained at cost from Alaska’s Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (907) 269-3460.



Division of Maternal, Child & Family Health  
 Special Needs Services Unit  
 PO Box 240249  
 Anchorage, Alaska 99524-0249

Revised 2002

This publication was released by the State of Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, Division of Public Health, Section of Maternal, Child & Family Health. It was printed at a cost of \$1.89 per copy in Anchorage, Alaska.  
 This cost block is required by AS 44.99.210.